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INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE & AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA-UAW

DENNIS WILLIAMS, Secretary-Treasurer

February 19, 2013

To: Senator Harp, Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee

From: Beverley Brakeman, United Auto Workers

Re: H.B. No. 6350 AN ACT CONCERNING THE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2015, AND
OTHER PROVISIONS RELATING TO REVENUE.

Good evening. My name is Beverley Brakeman. I am the political representative for the United Auto Workers (UAW) Region 9A. I am here this evening on behalf of our Director Julie Kushner and our members of UAW Local 2320. Our members are legal service attorneys who provide services to low income people dealing with domestic violence, homelessness, and lack of access to disability benefits, Medicaid and other safety net services.

We are here this evening to thank your committee, the legislature, the Governor and the Judicial Branch for their commitment to Connecticut's legal service programs and services. The Governor and the Judicial Branch have proposed a continuation of the \$1.5 million in legal services funding in the Judicial Branch Budget. This consistent revenue source along with the filing fee revenue passed last year has kept our services from collapsing.

That said, unfortunately, the capacity of the state's legal service programs has been greatly diminished over the past four years and they continue to struggle to provide adequate services because the filing fee revenue has come in at about 10% less than expected. As a result, the programs are once again trying to trim their budgets and we expect we will be back in coming years seeking your assistance in sustaining these life saving programs.

To quote Senator Harp, a true champion of our legal service members, "To fulfill the democratic ideal of equal protection and equal opportunity under the law, all Connecticut residents must have equal access to legal counsel if and when necessary. Our state's provision for legal aid, to those who qualify is evidence of our commitment to that ideal".

It is this ideal that keeps our members, who are over-worked, under-resourced and under-paid, going every day. They have maintained unprecedented levels of professionalism and commitment to their clients and to their employer while enduring an enormous amount of stress that is both personal and professional. They have sustained pay cuts and reduced hours while managing growing and more complicated client loads and responsibilities. We urge your continued support of these programs and services.

Another proposal before this committee is the consolidation of the legislature's commissions. You will be hearing from our Assistant Director Ted Feng, a Commissioner with the CT Asian Pacific American Commission this evening with more details on our concerns, however, as a very diverse union we understand the important work these commissions do to support their constituencies specific needs for services and resources as well as their unique contributions to our state. Therefore on behalf of our CAP Council, we urge this committee to oppose the consolidation of the commissions.

Thank you.